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ON TAP

Volume 13 Issue 3**MARCH 2007**

SPRING TUNE-UP FOR WATER SAVINGS

GARDEN WATER BASICS

In the West, water is as precious as gold. Most of our rainfall comes in winter, yet many garden plants need the most irrigation in summer during our driest months. Seasonal droughts, groundwater pollution, and population growth all stress this valuable resource. If we are to have enough water in the future, we must avoid wasting water in our homes and gardens today.

Of the water we use at home, about 50 percent goes to irrigation. So the most important place to start a conservation program is right outside our doors. Fortunately, water conservation doesn't mean planting a barren landscape; it means choosing plants well adapted to our climate, improving the soil, watering efficiently, and taking advantage of the latest irrigation technology.

SIGNS OF A LEAKING SYSTEM

1. **Broken sprinkler head.** This may not be as obvious as you think, especially if you run your sprinklers early in the day. If you see unusual wet spots on the pavement or other areas, or dry spots in the lawn, turn on your sprinkler system and watch it operate. Repair or replace broken or clogged heads.

2. **Feeble output.** Watch your system operate. Weak output at one or more heads means a leak, clog, or break somewhere – or too many sprinklers on the system.

3. **Lowest sprinkler leaks constantly.** This is a problem not with the sprinkler but with the valve. It's not shutting off completely. Other indicators are taller or greener grass or moss growing around the sprinkler. Inspect the valve and replace worn or damaged parts.

4. **Water meter is always running.** If the meter runs even when all the water is turned off (indoors and out), there's a leak somewhere. To find it, check toilets and indoor and outdoor faucets as well as the irrigation components mentioned here.

5. **Wet spots appear.** Muddy spots, eroding soil, and bulging sod all can be signs of a broken pipe or riser in the lawn. You'll need to do some digging to locate the trouble. The problem may be loose connections or aging washers if the wet spots occur around valves.

6. **Valve box fills with water.** This could be caused by sprinkler water hitting the box or, in clay soils, by water draining through sprinkler line trenches. There is little you can do about either. The box should drain after watering. Its failure to do so might also be caused by a leaking valve or broken pipe. To find out, drain the box and look for leaks. Tighten packing nuts and replace washers if necessary.

CONVERTING SPRINKLERS TO DRIP

If some zones of your conventional sprinkler system are watering plants that could be more efficiently irrigated with drip, you can retrofit your system making use of the existing underground pipes. Some conversions to drip systems call for removing all the conventional sprinklers in a zone, connecting drip components at one or more risers, and capping all risers that aren't used. In most cases, you should add a filter and pressure regulator to the line.

WHERE DOES THE WATER GO?

Outdoors

- A 1/2-inch diameter hose delivers 300 gallons per hour, a 5/8-inch hose up to 500 gph, and a 3/4 -inch hose as much as 600 gph.
- A standard sprinkler head emits 1/2 to 4 gallons of water per minute.
- One drip irrigation emitter delivers 1/2 to 2 gallons of water per hour.

Indoors

- A standard showerhead delivers 5 to 8 gallons per minute (50 to 80 gallons for a 10-minute shower).
- A low-flow showerhead delivers 1-1/2 to 3 gallons of water per minutes (15 to 30 gallons for a 10-minute shower).

SUGGESTED WEEKLY WATER

SCHEDULE FOR MARCH AND APRIL

	Turf grass	Trees, shrubs, groundcover
March	3 days, 2 cycles* of 3 minutes	2 days, 2 cycles of 3 minutes
April	3 days, 2 cycles* of 4 minutes	2 days, 2 cycles* of 4 minutes

March and April are the most active growth periods for turf grass and other plants. Be sure to water adequately.

* By "cycling" your irrigation timer to turn on for the suggested number of minutes an hour apart, you reduce runoff and gain deeper watering and healthier root growth.

The Regular Board Meeting is held on the third Wednesday of each month at 7:00 p.m. at the District office located at 32003 Dove Canyon Drive, Trabuco Canyon. The public is encouraged to attend.

BOARD HIGHLIGHTS

- ◇ February 20, 2007 – Received a status report relating to the Dry Season Water Recovery Project (Dove Canyon, Phase II).
- ◇ Approved an Amendment relating to the Baker Regional Treatment Facility Feasibility Study.
- ◇ Approved the Saddleback Meadows 2006 Sub-Area Master Plan Addendum.
- ◇ Approved the Facility Use Policy for the Administrative Facility.

ON TAP is published and distributed by TCWD. We welcome your comments, suggestions and questions. Please call or write Sharon E. Smith, Editor

TCWD's *ON-TAP*

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